ENGINERR'S BODY IN ENGINE HOUSE RUINS
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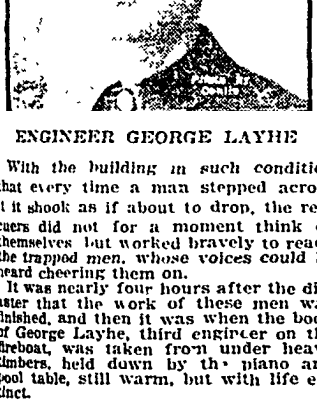
George Layhe Crushed by Piano and Wreckage

Firemen Show Heroism in Saving Trapped Comrades

Heroic work was done by members of the Boston Fire Department yesterday afternoon, every minute at the risk of their lives, when they chopped and dug in the debris of Engine 31 quarters in an effort to take out alive comrades who had been buried when the interior of the building collapsed as a result of the accident at the molasses tank on Commercial st



ENGINEER GEORGE LAYHE

With the building in such condition that every time a man stepped across it it shook as if about to drop, the rescuers did not for a moment think of themselves but worked bravely to reach the trapped men, whose voices could be heard cheering them on.

It was nearly four hours after the disaster that the work of these men was finished, and then it was when the body of George Layhe, third engineer on the fireboat, was taken from under heavy timbers, held down by the piano and pool table, still warm, but with life extinct.

City Employe Rescued

With the exception of the removal of John Barry, a city employe who was eating his lunch in the engine house, the rescuers did not have much trouble in getting out the half-dozen men trapped under the falling floors.

Barry was pinned in such a manner, with a big section of the tank in front of him, that it was necessary for the firemen to burn a hole in the tank with an acetylene torch before they could reach the building and start cutting the timbers.

Lieut John Williams, who was in charge of the company, had just left the station and reached Hanover and Commercial sts on his way to dinner when he heard a roar, and, turning, saw a cloud of dust, and, as he thought smoke, covering the fire station and the entire vicinity.

He heard cries at the same time and ran back, but could not get near the entrance to the station owing to the flood of molasses that rolled toward him, as well as the flying debris. He immediately rushed to a Naval station and a launch was put out for him and he was taken around the end of the pier and landed on his boat.

As he climbed over the side of the fireboat he met hosemen Gillispie and Gregorio limping down the pier, and in reply to his questions they said that the building had collapsed. They escaped by jumping from windows as the building started to fall, but the other members of the crew were trapped in the ruins.

Lieut Williams rushed to the building and saw that the entire interior had collapsed. He could also hear groans and cries from the men trapped inside. He climbed through a window, but owing to the weight of the timbers and other objects pinning the men he was unable to assist them alone.

Men Taken From Ruins

He then rushed out to the corner of the building and tried to signal for somebody on the street to sound the fire nals were answered and he returned to the building and with the help of Gillisalarm. His signals were answered and he returned to the building and with the help of Gillispie and Gregorie, succeeded in getting a couple of the men out.

When he left the station for dinner, the men on duty were Engineers Layhe, Browning and Connors, and hosemen Driscoll, McDermott, Gillispie and Gregorie.

When the additional rescuers arrived in answer to the alarm, Browning and Connors were quickly pulled out and with Driscoll and McDermott sent to the hospital. Layhe could not be located, but groans from under the rear of the building led the rescuers to believe that he was there.

When an attempt was made to get to him, it was learned that the big steel section of the tank was in the way, and Lieut Dan Hurley and Hoseman Andy Larson of Rescue Company 1 rushed for their machine, obtained the metal-cutting torch and started to work on the tank.

It took but a short time for them to burn out a hole large enough for a man to enter, and Larson went in with an ax. He had but little cutting to do before he reached the man. With the assistance of other firemen who went through the hole, he pulled the prisoner out, and it was then that the firemen learned that the man rescued was John Barry and not Layhe.

Barry was rushed to a hospital, while the rescuers, under the direction of District Chief William E. Riley, took up the work of locating Layhe. At this time it was discovered that the heater in the building, when tipped over in the debris, had set fire to the ruins. Chief Riley had a line of hose laid and a stream of water turned into the fire.

Search Building Thoroughly

Cries and signals to Layhe failed to get any response and the men started to search the entire place. One of the members of the company remembered that Layhe had said a few minutes before the disaster that he was going to bed and should be called about 1 o'clock.

This information led the rescuers toward the engineer's bunkroom and after hours of work, every bit of which was done in the most careful manner, Lahye's body was found at the foot of the sliding pole pinned down by a big timber, with the piano and pool table across the timber.

When it was learned that the body was still warm, a call was sent for a doctor and one of the Army surgeons responded, plowing through the mud and molasses, but he said that no signs of life remained. The firemen, while they believed him, wanted to make sure that no means of saving Layhe's life were neglected and carried the body out. It was placed in an ambulance and sent to a hospital.

The fireboat which was tied up in its pier, but a few feet from the building, was not injured, but the coating of molasses that covered it will mean many days of hard work on the part of the crew before it is all off. The building was torn from its foundation and lifted about 10 feet toward the water.

The crew of the boat was so badly depleted that it was impossible to move her, but early in the night, Chief McDonough arranged for a detail and the boat was sent over to the slip of Engine 47, in East Boston. Chief Engineer O'Brien, who was having a day off, as soon as he learned of the disaster, hurried to the boat and reported for duty.

Engineers O'Brien and Foster, who were covering Engine 4 when the explosion came, with hoseman Gillispie and Gregorie, both of whom are injured but still on duty, constituted the regular crew that Lieut Williams had for duty last night.

None of the members of the crew could tell much of a story about the explosion, other than to say that a rumbling sound was heard and the next thing they knew was when the building seemed to leap into the air and start toward the water.

Deputy Chief John O. Tabor last night said that the building was in such a condition that it is liable to fall at any time.

LAYHE LEAVES HIS WIFE AND THREE CHILDREN

Third Engineer George A. Layhe of Fireboat 31 was widely known in East Boston, where he lived with his wife and three children at 401 Saratoga st. He had an excellent record in the Fire Department.

Engineer Layhe, from what his wife learned last night, was standing in the doorway of the quarters when the explosion occurred and was buried by the debris. He was born in Fort Plain, N Y, 37 years ago, and 19 years ago came to East Boston. He turned his hand to marine engineering and eight years ago was appointed to the Fire Department and assigned to Engine 31.

Besides his wife, Mrs Elizabeth A. Layhe and three children, Francis, aged 11; George, aged 8, and Helen, aged 3, Mr Layhe leaves two brothers and sisters. The funeral will take place Sunday. He was a member of the Boston Firemen's Relief Association.

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